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'DO'-NO-WHO'

IT is over a year ago since an Irish private, known to his pals by the above rather obvious contortion of the proper name of Donohue, was brought into the hospital. He came with a convoy of British who nearly all were suffering from gas poisoning as well as wounds. Those being the early days of 'the gaz,' as Do'-no-who called it, arrangements for its defeat were not yet altogether successful. After all, who could then have foreseen such a devilish invention of war? However, the poor, panting, choking, indeed in some cases, retching men, who came to us had been given some kind of protection. Each one clung still to his particular mask, limp, blackened, flimsy affair that it was.

Poor old Do'-no-who's condition was pretty desperate. You could hear him breathing fifty yards away. He was sustained from first to last by the most indomitable fighting spirit I ever came across. During a struggle of several days' duration there was only one order which he utterly declined to obey. Nothing would, nobody *could* keep him from talking—even in his sleep. I am bound to say it chiefly took the form of endless ejaculation. As, for instance, when with intense difficulty he managed at first to gulp down a little champagne, it was like this—'Isn't that fine now?' 'Grand!' or 'That's killin' the devil's own gaz'—a word at a time between every sip.

Soon realizing that every known resource was being tried to relieve his sufferings, old Do'-no-who did his level best to respond to it and to cheer us on. 'Och, I'm finely now,' or 'It's only the gaz

that's hindering ye's all,' he would say, with a sorry attempt to smile. But sometimes there would be anxious moments when he would lie back only partially conscious. Then it seemed as though he were engaged in some most exciting and exhausting struggle. Little exclamations of despair or joy in turn would escape him.

'Sure this gaz'll defate me!' 'Deed it will that!'

Then, after renewed panting, the perspiration would pour down his cheeks, and 'I have it!' 'Isn't it weighty now?' and the puff! puff! puff! greater than ever made one wonder what huge burden he thought he was lifting.

'I'm afraid he's a little delirious,' said the doctor, as he put his finger again on the patient's pulse. Old Do'-no-who seemed to hear this. He would open his eyes and say in a tone of triumph: 'Sure! Won't I be comminded for conspicuous gallantry!' So, whilst some doubted, others could only see conviction in his clear, steady, blue eye as he again thankfully attempted to inhale more oxygen. His hands were continually seeking and fingering a little string of beads that lay beside him: 'It was me rosary brought me t'rough,' he said, as he relapsed into a painful sleep.

Once he overheard some remark that rather pleased him, and he cut in rather unexpectedly: 'Yes, prayer is the foundation of all graces.'

In spite of the constant and hideous strain of the breathing, we were amazed at the way his constitution bore him along. Also he had certain intervals of marked improvement and we almost

dared to hope. So did Do'-no-who. 'Sure we'll niver die!' he said, and his eyes shone with such confidence and joy that we began to think he was right.

Even in his worst agony he had always managed to fling an occasional word of wit or chaff towards his companions. Now it was impossible to suppress him. Carried outside in his bed in the glorious sun, he and several of the patients quite revived under the influence of that soft May air.

It was a pathetic little row of beds; some of the men's faces so deadly white, others still of that dark, uncanny colour which tells its own story of asphyxiation. Yet few there were, indeed hardly one of those men within earshot of 'Do'-no-who that did not shake with weak giggling if he so much as opened his lips or looked across at them. There indeed was the medicine of the merry heart.

Alas! for us all, when one morning Do'-no-who began to show signs of relapse. He had had a bad night and was unmistakably low in his mind. Instead of the usual radiant smile and the variable welcome 'I'm grand!' or 'Sure, I'll be rightly sune,' it was a kind of beaten look that greeted us. His glad expression had suddenly changed to one of unutterable sadness. He gravely shook his head without a word and then sank back on the pillow.

Every effort was still being put forth to relieve him, but oxygen, 'dry-cupping,' and various other remedies seemed this time to have lost their power. Only, strange to say, the doctor found his pulse had lost little of its strength. He told him so.

'Mebbe, yer honour, but I'm greatly fataagued,' murmured Do'-no-who, as he wearily closed his eyes.

The truth was he had given himself up. Once a man does that it is little use to

argue with him. Poor old Do'-no-who's Gethsemane took the form of dire disappointment. 'Sure, I'll miss mi rewa-r-rd,' he faintly whispered.

Spite of all our attempts to keep bright, an atmosphere of depression was gradually creeping over the ward. The sudden change in Bed 14 was responsible for it all. Do'-no-who lay there perfectly helpless, his painful breathing sounding more like the regular sawing of a piece of wood than anything else.

In the afternoon there was little change, except that his pulse at last showed signs of weakening, the light had gone out of his eyes, and he was unable to swallow anything.

By this time some of the patients were beginning to get along well; so much easier was their breathing they were able to sleep in comparative comfort. Others, however, were wakeful. They only wished to lie quiet. Some indeed tried to look at picture papers, but you could tell by the quick, anxious glances they gave towards Bed 14 from time to time, that their thoughts were centred entirely on one person.

As the hours progressed we found that Do'-no-who's strength was gradually waning. His pulse was faint and fluttering, he had fallen into a heavy drowsy state, and his breathing came in short, light puffs. Yet all the time, strange to say, he would insist on keeping that great, strong arm of his right up at the back of his head which lay so still on the pillow. He remained like that for hours, whilst the breathing gradually slowed, faltered and went on again, till it was almost inaudible and the fluttering pulse could scarcely be felt. Then—quite suddenly—as he slept the tired head fell over and the big hand relaxed. He had stepped over the border without a struggle. We placed his hand gently beside him, and

took the rosary from the other one and hung it round his neck.

'The strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit
attained
And the barriers fall.

Sudden the worst turns the best to the
brave.

The black minute's at end.'

—BROWNING.

Before very long some orderlies came and fetched Do'-no-who. It was touching to see the patients—all who could—standing at attention as the stretcher came down the ward and was carried out through the door. Even those in bed managed to raise a weak hand to their forehead as the big frame of Donohue wrapped in a Union Jack passed along.

One, Murphy, a quiet, little Irishman with ferrety eyes who occupied the adjoining bed, had scarcely spoken all the time. We were not surprised, for he too had suffered badly from the gas, but judging by the way he kept his eyes rivetted on Do'-no-who we felt he took more than ordinary interest in his case. Now, as the sad little procession disappeared, Murphy turned right over on his pillow and quietly covered his face with his sheet. When a little later we told him we had put his supper near him, he left it untouched, and silently declined to emerge from his retreat.

That night when most of the others had gone to sleep, Murphy was seen to uncover his face, and as the night Sister passed down the ward he signalled to her.

Most pitifully red and tear-stained though he was, he had evidently something important to say. He began abruptly:

'I'm spakin' God's truth to ye, Sister, I tell you I saw him miself.'

'Saw whom, Murphy?'

'Yon man,' waving toward the empty bed. 'Don't ye mind what he told ye about conspicuous gallantry?'

'Oh to be sure. You mean poor Donohue? But didn't the doctor say he was delirious?'

'God's truth,' again said Murphy. 'Do'-no-who was no man for lying. I'll tell ye all I saw, Sister.'

'Don't you think you had better try and sleep now? We can talk better in the morning.'

'Deed no, it's little sleep I'll get till me mind's relaised,' and poor Murphy looked so distressed and worried the Sister saw it was best to let him have his way. This is what he told her.

'Do ye mind the day we was brought in? It was that foreneune we'd had the biggest gaz battle that iver ye saw. Sure, we'd shtarted attackin' finely. We Irish boys was with the Highlanders. We'd quit our trenches and was for dashing right across to the Boches, when all in a minute we seemed to come intil a gaz cloud. It set us shtrugglin' and imprecatin' and shplutterin'. Do'-no-who was beside me. We would have suffocated entoirely, so we got to runnin'. Do'-no-who, strong boy that he was, was prancin' along past me, chokin' and trying to git his mask fix'd on him, when he stopped all of a sudden. He might have been par'rlised.

"Come along," ses I, what with the gaz.

"Divil a bit," ses he. "I've just moinded the machane-gun. We've left it for the Boches."

"How could we help't?" ses I. "Think o' yiself and quit troublin' about machane guns."

"I am thinkin' of miself," ses Do'-no-who. "Sure I'm the boy that can fetch it out." With that he lept off and back

into the gaz cloud, whilst I did nothin'—may the holy Virgin forgive me! I went on runnin' and shtrugglin' to get clear o' the gaz which was killin' me.'

Here Murphy broke down and sobbed aloud with the memory.

'After a wee while,' he went on presently, 'whin I'd joined the boys and was for settin' beside thim, where we was all coughin' and chokin' and shpittin', I saw the stritcher bearers comin' along. They had been pickin' up several of us and on the last stritcher of all didn't I see puir Do'-no-who? Och! but he was pantin' like a shteam roller and black in the face.

"Are ye dead?" ses I intil his ear as he passed me.

"I'm not," he whishpor'd, "only spacheless."

'That was all, and I shtaggared on after them. 'Twas the divil's own tramp to the dressin' station. I could see them takin' Do'-no-who in. After a while one of his stritcher bearers came out, so I got spakin' till him.

"Yon's a grand man," ses he.

"He is. Where did ye find him?" ses I. "I lost him in the misht."

"We caught sight of him comin' thro'

the gaz," ses he. "He was rollin' and shtumblin' like as he was in drink, but he was bringin' somethin' along on his shoulders. We couldn't see what it was at first. It seemed weighty—he was doubled up under it like a camel. We'd got near him, about fifty yards off, when he giv another big shtumble and over he trip't and fell over all in a big wee bonch. When we got till him he was shtretched out flat and a machane-gun was lying beside him. Ochone, it's done for him I'm thinkin' but sure, hadn't he the divil's own pluck to bring it that far?" ses he.'

Murphy lay very quiet after he had finished his tale, but he was now distinctly relieved. He submitted to having his bed made comfortable and his pillows shaken, and he let the Sister give him a little soup before settling off.

She passed him half an hour afterwards and was thankful to see that the ferrety eyes were closed. By the difficult but regular breathing that came from that tired, little body she knew that sleep, in merciful pity, had wiped out the memory of the machine-gun tragedy—for a few hours at any rate.

DOSIA BAGOT.

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